



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

LABOR FOR PRISONERS

office the law will be enforced. Every member of the uniformed force who is negligent in the performance of police duty will be summoned to headquarters to answer charges, and if such charges are sustained he will be incontinently dismissed. I shall try to be just and fair-minded, but when I dismiss an officer for cause it may be taken for granted without discussion that no influence he can bring—political, social or personal—will have the slightest weight in his favor. Should he secure reinstatement by a court of competent jurisdiction, I shall, of course, respect such order; but he will be dismissed again the moment his negligence warrants it. What has been designated as “the system” is confronted by a condition and not a theory. It may be stronger than I am, stronger than the mayor, stronger than public opinion; that is to be determined; but in the trial of conclusions there is likely to be an official guillotine worked overtime and a large basketful of heads. This is my ultimatum. Now do me the favor to return to your respective precinct stations and get busy.’”

R. H. G.

Labor for Prisoners.—A novel experiment in humanizing the prisoners has been carried on for some time at Montpelier, Vt., of which Mr. Morrison I. Swift gives an interesting account in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Not long ago the public press contained extensive comments upon a situation which has been found to exist in many of the state prisons, and a magazine article, which described how a great manufactory has its goods made by convicts in several states for thirty-four cents a day, gained considerable notoriety. The situation in Montpelier as described by Mr. Swift’s article presents a positive contrast to this one.

In the streets of Montpelier, after visiting the prison, Mr. Swift met five or six of the very prisoners he had seen in jail, now walking about the streets with no prison garb, apparently free, contented and happy. They had been out to do their daily work, and, when it was over, of their own accord returned to the prison. The system under which this singular state of affairs was made possible was brought about by the sheriff of the county in which Montpelier is situated. He found a law which permitted those prisoners in the county jail who are committed for the less serious offenses to be put at work “either within or without the walls of the prison.” It seemed to him that most of the prisoners deserved compassion rather than blame; that prison life without regular work was degrading them and injuring their health, and that it turned them out at the end of their terms worse physically and morally than when their imprisonment began. At first he put some of the men to work on his own farm, paying the state for their labor. Later he put them at work in laying water-mains; their wages, \$1.75 a day, all went to the state. Both these experiments were complete failures. The men showed no interest in the work, and did just as little as they possibly could. The sheriff, Mr. Tracy, discovered the reason of the failure one day when he asked one of the prisoners why he would not work well, and received the reply, “I’m doing just as little as I can and not be punished, and I’m going to keep on. You would do the same.” Instantly the idea occurred to Mr. Tracy that he might furnish an incentive to the men to work, and he asked, “If you could have seventy-five cents for yourself from your work every day, what would you do?” “Try me,” was the answer. From that time on the pay received for the work was divided. Out of the full laborer’s wage of \$1.75 a day, one

SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF LAW

dollar was given to the state, and seventy-five cents was retained by the sheriff for the prisoner, and the accumulated sum paid to him when he left prison. The innovation was extended and the men's earnings now amount to a considerable sum.

The Montpelier plan succeeded because under its operation the prisoners were trusted. They were given responsibilities of their own.

Mr. Swift says that "when such a prisoner finds that he is treated as a man, 'a feeling of mingled surprise, gratitude, elation, and pride, awakens in him; he learns for the first time the value of social esteem and determines to deserve it.' Other counties have, to some extent, adopted the system, but so far not with anything like the success obtained in Montpelier. It is evident that the personal equation counts in this matter, and that the character of the sheriff at Montpelier has a good deal to do with the success of the experiment there; an officer carrying on such a system must not only be a 'combined labor bureau and labor exchange,' but must have a really sincere interest in the welfare of the prisoner. The law itself was not a remarkable one, but the way in which it has been carried out seems extraordinary, and full of suggestion and promise. The Montpelier plan appeals to the self-interest of the prisoner in a practical way, and it develops also strength of purpose and self-respect. One question at once arises in the minds of the readers: What attitude would the labor unions take as regards such a plan? At Montpelier the men have been employed only in comparatively unskilled forms of work, even although they had learned a trade; but Mr. Swift tells us that he was assured by a trade union leader that there would not be the slightest objection on the part of the unions to any man with a trade exercising it, provided he were given union wages. It would not be safe to draw sweeping conclusions from the experiment described; but it is certainly true that such an attempt deserves most careful consideration. Mr. Swift points out that there has been a general movement the country over in the direction of giving a new chance to criminals who are not hardened. As a striking instance of this he quotes a sentence imposed by a judge in Los Angeles upon a young man who had embezzled five thousand dollars and spent it in dissipation: 'You shall stay at home nights. You shall remain within the limits of this county. You shall not play billiards or pool, frequent cafes, or drink intoxicating liquor, and you shall go immediately to work and keep at it until you have paid back every dollar you stole. Violate these terms and you go to prison.' "

R. H. G.

The Scientific Study of the Law.—The following is quoted from a letter by Mr. Axel Teisen, of Philadelphia, to the editor of the *Central Law Journal*, who very emphatically approves the plan herein set forth:

"As far as I have been able to learn, there is not in this whole country a single periodical solely devoted to the scientific discussion of law, except, perhaps, some university publications, more or less in the nature of playgrounds for budding jurists. The practical portions of the journals are the most important, and all theoretical papers have to be cut short, as but a small space can be allowed to them.

"A purely theoretical periodical would probably not pay; but in case of an old-established, very widely known and appreciated publication, might it not be practical and possible to devote one issue each month to theoretical discus-